CLAIMS

1. A system for delivering goods to and retrieving goods from a secure storage unit comprising:

a locker, further comprising an interior in which at least one good may be inserted and a first door by which access to the interior may be obtained;

a locking device attached to the locker and securing access to the interior of the locker via the first door;

a server, in communication with the locker; and

a user interface, in communication with the server;

whereupon receipt of a request from a user, via the user interface, to access the interior of the locker, the controller determines whether the user is authorized to access the locker and when authorized directs the locking device to unlock the first door.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the locker further comprises one of a plurality of lockers in a storage unit.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the locker further comprises at least one of a garage, a mailbox, a shipping container, a trailer, a box, a single compartment locker, a multiple compartment locker, a refrigerated locker, a heated locker, a video return locker, a self-sterilizing locker, and a clothing locker.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the locker is utilized by a single user to send and receive goods.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the locker is utilized by multiple users to send and receive goods.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein the locker is located at a private residence, an apartment complex, a business, a vendor facility, a customer facility, a carrier facility, a centralized location, a transit terminal, an airport, or a shopping mall.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the locker further comprises a second door providing access to the interior of locker via the second door.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the locker is attached to a building and the first door provides access to the interior of the locker from a location outside the building and the second door provides access to the interior of the locker from within the building.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the server controls access to the interior of the locker via at least one of the first door and the second door.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the locking device further comprises at least one of an electronically activated lock, a hydraulic lock, an electrical lock, a magnetic lock, an electro-magnetic lock, an electro-mechanical lock, and a mechanical lock.

11. The system of claim 1, wherein the communications between the server and the locker are established over an Internet connection.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein the server is in communication with a database containing data and content utilized by the server to control the operation of the locker and the locking device and access to the interior of the locker.

13. The system of claim 1, wherein the system further comprises a controller, associated with the locker and in communication with the locker and the server; wherein the controller establishes the communications between the server and the locker and, based upon instructions received from the server, controls the operation of the locking device.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the controller is in communication with the locker via at least one of a wired connection and a wireless connection.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein the wired connection further comprises an Ethernet connection.

16. The system of claim 14, wherein the wireless connection further comprises at least one established using infrared, satellite, and electromagnetic signals.

17. The system of claim 13, wherein the controller further comprises at least one of a personal computer, a programmable logic controller, a micro-processor, and a micro-controller.

18. The system of claim 13, wherein the controller further comprises a multi-tasking capable processor.

19. The system of claim 13, whereupon receipt of an input received from a user via the user interface, the controller communicates such inputs to the server; whereupon the server determines which of the at least one locker the user is to be provided access thereto and provides a response indicative of the determination to the controller; whereupon the controller commands the locking device to unlock those lockers to which the user is allowed access.

20. The system of claim 19, wherein the locker further comprises at least one sensor for detecting environmental conditions and security conditions, and communicates output signals from the at least one sensor to the controller; whereupon the controller monitors the output signals and generates an alarm when sensed conditions are other than desired.

21. The system of claim 13, wherein the controller and the user interface are located in a kiosk.

22. The system of claim 21, wherein the kiosk includes an ATM.

23. The system of claim 21 wherein the kiosk further comprises a vending machine.

24. The system of claim 22, wherein the vending machine dispenses at least one article of commerce.

25. The system of claim 13, further comprising a plurality of lockers controlled by the controller.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein the controller controls at least one locker in the plurality of lockers via a remote connection.

27. The system of claim 13, wherein the user interface device further comprises a display monitor, a keyboard and a scanner.

28. The system of claim 1, wherein the user interface further comprises a user interface device.

29. The system of claim 28, wherein the user interface device utilizes a wireless connection to communicate with the server.

30. The system of claim 1, wherein the user interface is provided on at least one of a personal data assistant and a DIAD board.

31. The system of claim 27, wherein the scanner further comprises at least one of a retinal scanner, a fingerprint scanner, a voice scanner, a magnetic card reader, a signature pad, a bar code scanner, and an infrared data transceiver.

32. The system of claim 1, wherein the customer is notified when a delivery of a good to a locker occurs.

33. The system of claim 32, wherein the notification occurs via at least one of an e-mail message, a page, a Short Message Service (SMS), a phone call, a facsimile, and a web page message.

34. A system for controlling access to a locker utilized to store goods comprising:

a locker, having an interior accessible via a door, wherein the locker is utilized to store at least one good;

a locking device, attached to the locker, for locking the door and controlling access to the interior of the locker;

a server for determining when a user may obtain access to the interior of the locker;

a kiosk, in communication with the locker and the server, further comprising:

a processor, for controlling the locking device and access to the interior of the locker;

an output device for communicating information to a user;

an input device for receiving communications from a user;

a communications interface establishing a communications link between the server and the processor; and

a consumer's device, in communication with the server, for receiving a notification when a delivery for a consumer to a locker has occurred.

35. The system of claim 34, wherein the system further comprises a carrier device for establishing a communications link between a carrier and the processor; whereupon establishment of the communications link, the carrier obtains authorization and access to at least one locker into which at least one good is inserted.

36. The system of claim 34, wherein the system further comprises a vendor's device, in communication with the server, wherein the vendor's device is utilized by a vendor to schedule a delivery of a good to the locker with the server.

37. The system of claim 34, wherein the consumer's device is utilized by a consumer to schedule a pickup, by at least one of a carrier, a second consumer, and a vendor, of a good inserted into a locker assigned by the server for the pick-up.

38. The system of claim 34, wherein the server is in communication with the kiosk via an Internet connection.

39. An apparatus for controlling access to a locker for storing goods, comprising:

a processor;

a user interface, connected to the processor, for establishing communications between a user and the processor;

a network connection, connecting the processor with at least one locker used to store goods; and

a communications interface, establishing a communications link between the processor and a server;

whereupon receipt of a request by a user, via the user interface, to gain access to a locker, the processor communicates the request to the server, and upon receipt of an approval from the server the processor directs the user, via the user interface, to the locker to which access has been granted and unlocks a locking device securing access to the locker.

40. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the processor and the user interface are provided via a personal computer.

41. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the user interface further comprises a touch sensitive display monitor.

42. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the user interface is provided via a wireless connection with at least one of a personal data assistant, a personal computing device, and a carrier DIAD board.

43. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the network connection further comprises at least one of an Ethernet connection and a serial connection.

44. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the apparatus further comprises at least one of an automated teller machine and a vending machine.

45. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the communications interface between the processor and the server is established via an Internet connection.

46. The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the Internet connection utilizes a digital subscriber link.

47. A locker for securing goods comprising:

an interior into which goods are inserted;

a door providing access to the interior;

a locking device securing the door and limiting access to the interior; and

a communications interface with a controller;

whereupon receipt of a request by a user to gain access to the interior of a locker, the processor communicates the request to a server, and upon receipt of

an approval from the server the processor directs the user, via a user interface, to the locker to which access has been granted and unlocks the locking device, and allows the user access to the interior of the locker.

48. The locker of claim 47, wherein the locker is configured as a plurality of lockers into a storage unit.

49. The locker of claim 48, wherein the storage unit further comprising a kiosk further comprising a controller, in communication with each locker in the storage unit and the server, for controlling access to the interior of each locker in the storage unit, via the corresponding locking device, based upon commands received from the server.

50. A method for delivering goods to a customer via a locker controlled by a server, comprising;

receiving a request from a customer for delivery of a good to a locker;

processing the request via a server to determine at which locker the good is to be delivered;

delivering the good to the locker identified by the server;

notifying the customer of the delivery of the good and the locker at which the good was delivered; and

upon retrieval of the good from the locker by the customer, notifying the server that the locker is available for subsequent use.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein the request is received via an internet connection between a consumer's device and the server.

52. The method of claim 50, wherein the request is received via a connection between a consumer's device and a vendor's device and the request is communicated to the server via a second connection between the vendor's device and the server.

53. The method of claim 50, wherein the request is received at a kiosk associated with the locker.

54. The method of claim 50, wherein the processing of the request by the server further comprises:

receiving an identification of the customer requesting the delivery;

determining a location of the locker to be utilized for the delivery of the good;

assigning the locker to the delivery; and

communicating an access code to a carrier designated to deliver the good.

55. The method of claim 54, wherein the determination of the locker to be utilized for the delivery of the good utilizes at least one parameter selected from the group consisting of: a preferred locker preference, an alternative locker preference, a place of business, a residence address, a type of good to be shipped, a time constraint, and a time of day.

56. The method of claim 50, wherein delivering the good to the locker identified by the server further comprises:

providing a carrier access code, via a user verification device and a controller, to the server, wherein the controller controls access to the locker via a locking device and upon receipt of commands from the server;

receiving an approval from the server to allow access by the carrier to the locker;

automatically unlocking the locker; and

inserting the good into the locker.

57. The method of claim 50, wherein the notifying the customer of the delivery of the at least one good to the at least one locker further comprises sending at least one notification message selected from the group consisting of: a page, a telephone message, an e-mail, a Short Message Service (SMS), a written message, a facsimile, and a web page message.

58. A method for delivering goods to a customer by a carrier at a locker, comprising:

entering a carrier id number into a user verification device at a kiosk associated with a storage unit, the storage unit containing at least one secured locker controlled by a server via a controller;

upon verification of the carrier id number by the server, selecting a customer to whom the good is destined;

inserting the good into the locker; and

notifying the server of the insertion of the good into the locker.

59. The method of claim 58,whereupon the server receiving the carrier id number, the server verifies the carrier id number, determines to which customer the carrier is scheduled to deliver goods at the storage unit, provides a listing of such customers to the carrier, and upon receipt of a selection of a customer by the carrier, directs the kiosk to unlock the locker.

60. The method of claim 59, wherein the locker is pre-assigned by the server.

61. The method of claim 59, wherein the locker utilized by the carrier to insert the goods therein is dynamically allocated and the process further comprises:

receiving an identification of available lockers; and

selecting an available locker;

whereupon selection of an available locker by the carrier, the server directs the kiosk to unlock the locker.

62. The method of claim 59, wherein the method further comprises specifying whether a customer must sign for the good before access to the good is allowed.

63. The method of claim 59, wherein the method further comprises:

selecting an option to pick-up a good to be delivered, wherein the good is located in a locker associated with the kiosk; and

removing the good from the locker;

wherein the good was previously inserted into the locker by a customer upon establishing a shipment request with the server and obtaining access to the locker.